

Raising the debt ceiling a huge mistake

Perhaps little-seen news item today had Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi announcing that she and other House members will seek to raise the debt ceiling. This is a colossally irresponsible thing to do.

Allowing the federal government to incur more debt will only encourage more spending. They already voted once earlier this year to raise it to \$12.1 trillion. On Wednesday, national debt was reportedly at \$12.08 trillion, inching up toward that ceiling.

But what is this mysterious debt ceiling? Well, it's just what it sounds like, a limit on the debt that the federal government can incur. It began in 1917 when Congress passed the Second Liberty Bond Act. It was designed to allow the U.S. Treasury Department to have more freedom in managing national debt, as long as it didn't go over \$8 billion.

When the country has a budget deficit, it is allowed to sell debt to whomever wants to buy it in order to make up the difference, and it was all supposed to be kept in check by the debt ceiling. However, each time the debt goes higher, Congress raises the ceiling to keep the country above water.

But what happens if the debt hits the ceiling? The country goes into default. But if you keep moving the goal post, you'll just keep moving down the field forever. Put another way, if you keep revising the limit, why have one at all. And more importantly if we keep allowing more and more debt, how do we ever expect there to be less of it.

Look at it this way. If a person kept borrowing and borrowing and never paid it back, wouldn't you stop loaning them money? Wouldn't you tell them they're not going to get another cent until they pay down what they've already borrowed? You don't tell them you'll just keep giving them more.

In 1917, Congress gave the federal government a limit, and they haven't stuck to it, so Congress keeps raising the limit. In 2005, it was \$8.18 trillion. In 2008, it was \$11.3 trillion.

When will the day come when we expect our government to reduce its debt? When will we say enough is enough?

Now, nobody wants the country to go into default, but it's time for Congress to show some tough love. It's time for Congress to push the current administration, and all those after it, to decrease the amount of spending and increase revenue so that we don't have to borrow so much.

This should be a non-partisan issue. It doesn't matter how we got there, but the country is \$12.08 trillion in the hole - shouldn't we all want it to climb out?

— Kevin Bottrell

No takers for movie night

There were no takers at my house when I extended an invitation to Jim and son, James, to watch the movie, "Julie & Julia" with me. They both, suddenly, had something else to do.

It was the story of one woman's (Julie) fascination with French chef and author, Julia Child. Mrs. Child wrote a cookbook for American women on how to prepare French food and Julie Powell blogged about cooking her way through every recipe in the book.

That's OK. I knew it was a "chick-flick" so I just watched it by myself. And, thoroughly enjoyed it. I've never been a fancy cook, but I've always wanted to try making a gourmet meal. I know the difference between a croissant and a crescent roll; between sauteing and frying; and between a fine Bourdeaux wine and Thunderbird. But, just once, I would love to serve a beautiful beef Bourgeois to guests or a scrumptious soufflé.

So, until I get up the nerve to try, I'll keep making chicken fried steaks, mashed potatoes and gravy. Besides, if Jim can't pronounce it, he may not eat it.

— ob —

Some things a girl never forgets. Like fragrances.

A dear friend of mine recently had to move into the long-term care facility where Jim's father lives. Fern had worked for many years at one of the local drug stores. She knew the entire inventory but, I suspect, she especially liked working in the cosmetic department.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



Her room is right next to Dad's. The first time I saw her there I bent over her wheel chair and gave her a hug. She returned the embrace and without missing a beat said, "You're wearing Red Door."

Even at 93, there are some things a girl never forgets.

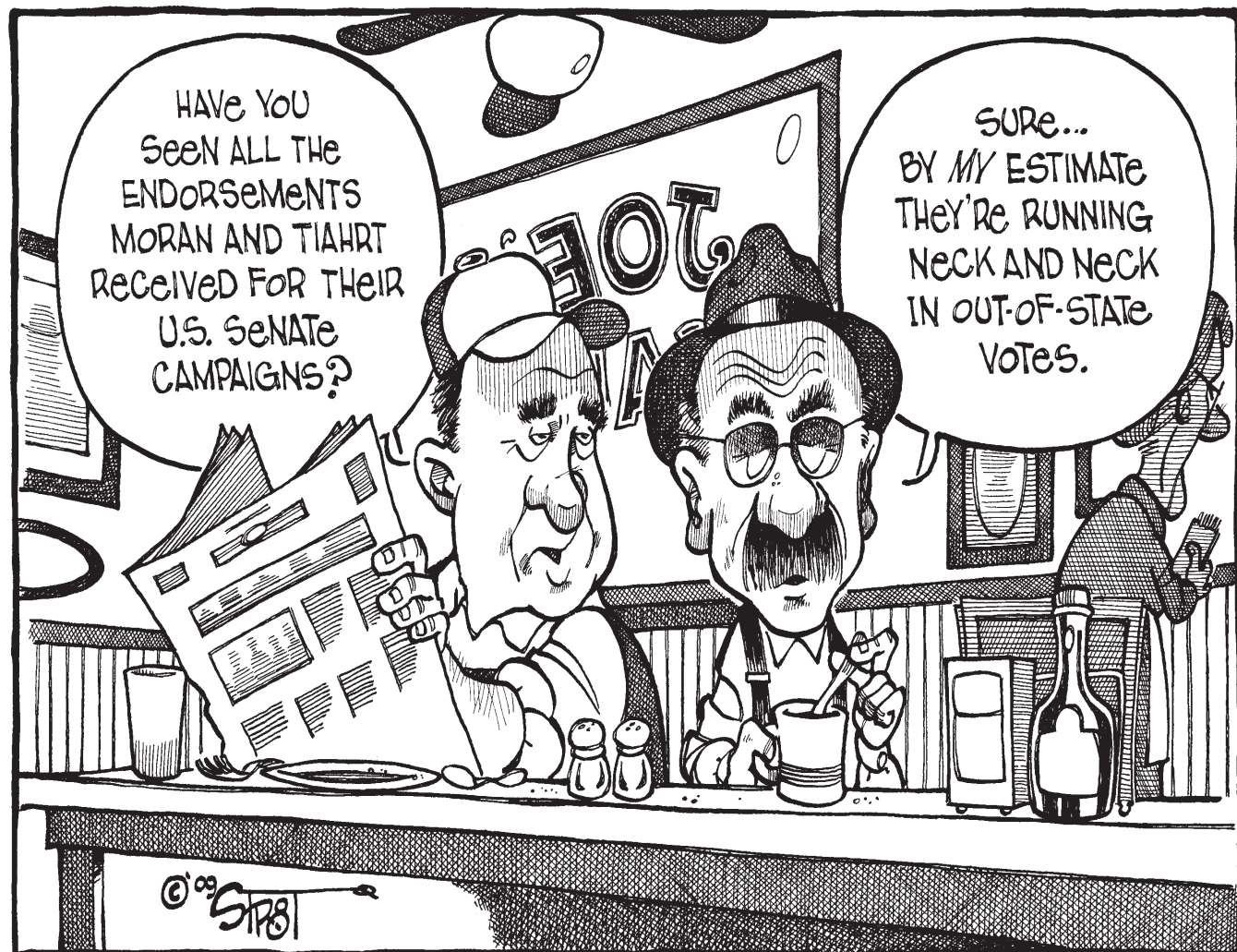
— ob —

Our daughter, Jennifer, is employed by a major software company and is fortunate to be able to work out of her home. That means Ani, her three and a half year old daughter, can be at home with her.

Jennifer has converted her dining room into her office and little Ani has her own desk set up in a corner. I was talking with Jennifer this morning when she interrupted our conversation and said to Ani, "Go wash your face right now, young lady."

When Jennifer came back on the line she said Ani had gotten into the refrigerator, taken a bowl of non-dairy whipped topping, sat behind her chair where Jennifer couldn't see her and put it on her face like a beard.

Sounds like Ani has seen Santa Claus one too many times.



First Amendment Day

First Amendment Day

Doug Anstaett

The right to bear arms.
The right against self-incrimination.
The right to a jury trial.
And, lest I forget, freedom of the press.

Yes, 218 years ago, the founders accepted almost verbatim George Mason's "Virginia Declaration of Rights" as the bedrock statement of our individual rights as Americans.

George Mason isn't a household name, unless you're a huge sports fan, especially of college basketball.

While we should put our nation's founders on their own unique pedestal, we can't lose sight of the fact that had it not been for George Mason's dogged determination to get his "Declaration of Rights" accepted as the first amendments to the new Constitution, we might not live in a country where we can speak out, hold

opinions that others find objectionable or even abhorrent, be considered innocent until proven guilty, exercise our religious beliefs or choose not to believe and assemble for or against an issue without fear of recrimination.

George Mason held back his support of the new Constitution, saying that the blueprint for a new nation lacked the absolutely essential ingredients that would place the individual above the state in almost all circumstances.

Had he not done so, we might be living in a very different country today.

So, on Dec. 15, whoop it up a little in celebration of Bill of Rights Day.

And if you happen to go to a holiday party or two, you can impress your fellow guests with your knowledge of the history of the Bill of Rights.

Someone once said they never discuss politics or religion.

What country are they from?

Doug Anstaett is executive director of the Kansas Press Association. An award-winning editorialist, he is a former publisher of the Newton Kansan and editorial page editor of the Topeka Capital-Journal.

Prepare for winter driving

Insight

John Schlageck

extra weight during the winter. He always lugged around tractor tire weights while some of his neighbors preferred sand and sprinkled the gritty stuff in front of their tires for extra traction in snow and ice.

If someone absolutely had to go out during a winter storm, Dad preached extra time and patience. If you're frightened or overly concerned about weather conditions - don't drive. Wait the storm out.

Remember, it takes a while to find your "driving legs" each new winter season, he'd say.

Relax. Sit back in the seat. From time to time take deep breaths. Don't grip the wheel until your knuckles turn white.

Try to anticipate what other drivers intend to do. Let them speed, spin, slip and slide. Allow at least twice as long to reach your destination. Concentrate on the road ahead, behind and on your right and left.

While driving during hazardous weather brings out the worst in some drivers, it can also bring out the best in others. Some welcome the chance to brave the elements. To drive safely under such conditions can provide a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Drive safely and know your limitations. Remember, if you have to take a chance that could result in an accident or worse, "Stay off the road."

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

It's not recognized as a national holiday.

We don't get the day off from work.

We don't see throngs of people carrying signs celebrating it - or denigrating it, for that matter.

And the day doesn't even show up on most calendars.

In fact, if Jay Leno went "Jaywalking" and asked the average American citizen what we celebrate on Dec. 15 each year, he likely would get nothing more than a blank stare.

Dec. 15? "I have no idea," would be the common answer. "I'm too busy shopping for Christmas presents."

Yet, on that day and virtually every other day of the year, Americans freely exercise the rights that came with the ratification of the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Freedom of speech.
Freedom of religion.
Freedom of assembly.
Freedom to petition government for a redress of grievances.

The right to due process.

While it's not officially winter, many of you may have already experienced the wrath of this season. More than a foot of snow blanketed parts of the state last week. Other sections of Kansas reported blizzard conditions, freezing rain and ice which make winter driving dangerous and nothing to fool around with.

When I think about the perils associated with winter travel, I think about my dad's simple, but sound advice, "Stay off the roads."

My dad lived by this creed for more than 80 years in northwestern Kansas. He'd seen his share of blowing and drifting snow. When he talked about western Kansas blizzards, the years of '31 and '57 were singled out.

The '31 blizzard hit on April Fools Day and killed hundreds of cattle. One of Dad's neighbors lost 80 head of cattle in a pasture less than a quarter mile west of their small community of Seguin in northwestern Kansas.

I was just a youngster, but I remember the blizzard of '57. Snow drifted as high as the roof on my friend Vernon Rietcheck's two-story home. We sledged down the drifts and played in the snow all day.

Our parents weren't as lucky. There were roads to open and cattle to feed and water. Our homes were without electricity for five days.

My father and those hearty souls who lived on the High Plains learned from these storms. He learned to travel only when necessary - to feed, water and care for his livestock. He never traveled anywhere in his pickup without several pairs

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654. Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002



Office hours:
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail:
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Dana Paxton.....general manager
advertising director
Dick Boyd.....Blue Jay sports
Erica Bradley.....managing editor
Harriett Gill.....society editor
Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson.....computer production